

IN THE SPECIFICATION

Please amend the specification as follows.

[Please amend the paragraph on page 4, lines 15-19, as follows.]

fb2
In addition to the difficulties associated with integrating rebates and coupons into their online sales systems, retailers have monetary disincentives to do so. In particular, a retailer typically purchases goods expecting a certain profit margin upon selling such goods. To apply a manufacturer's coupon or rebate at the time ~~f~~ of the sale requires the retailer to seek at least a part, if not all of their profit from the manufacturer 30-90 days after making the sale.

Please amend the paragraph on page 5, lines 5-17, as follows.

fb3
After receiving a product, if a buyer is interested in redeeming a coupon or rebate ~~and/or~~ and/or registering the product, for technical support or update reasons, the buyer must typically fill out a form, which they mail via post to the manufacturer. Upon receipt, the manufacturer will have to read the handwriting of the buyer to add the buyer's information from the form to their database. If the good purchased is software, only registration information may be gathered during installation. The buyer is still forced to interact with the manufacturer via post for coupons or rebates. The entire process fails if the buyer misplaces the receipt or the coupon or rebate or fails to file the same within a required timeframe. Upon receipt of such information, the manufacturer must determine whether or not to honor a coupon or rebate. To do so, they must determine whether the coupon or rebate applies to a specific good that has been sold ~~t~~ to the specific buyer. Because this process ~~if~~ is difficult, it is not only time consuming, but is also subject to fraud. Such fraud may involve a purported buyer operating independently, a buyer and retailer operating together, or a retailer operating independently.

Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 5, line 19, and ending at page 6, line 2, as follows.

fb4
To combat fraud, manufacturers apply complicated approaches to attempt to link the coupon or rebate to the specific good, often confusing and disappointing buyers and retailers. For example, a fifteen digit model number may appear to correspond to a coupon being offered and causing a sale even though one digit may be off and only identified after a manufacturer's rejection has been received. If this happens to a retailer, the retailer may lose money on the sale of the item. If it happens to the buyer, the buyer may be angry with the retailer ~~and/or~~ and/or the manufacturer and avoid their businesses in the future.

Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 11, line 16, and ending at page 12, line 4, as follows.

fb5
The system 15 supports automatic and manual adjustments of promotional offerings, i.e. coupons, rebates, etc. Automatic adjustments may be triggered by a variety of parameters such as the amounts of coupons and rebates distributed, the ~~amt~~ amount of coupons and rebates redeemed, current product inventory levels of the manufacturer or the distributor or retailer, the shelf life of products ~~in~~ in inventory, etc. Adjustments may include increasing or decreasing the promotional value, i.e., the amount of the coupon or rebate, the quantity of coupons or rebates to be distributed, the term of the coupon or rebate, the goods to which the coupon or rebate may apply, or any other coupon or rebate parameter. The automatic adjustment parameters may be setup by the manufacturer, retailer, distributor, or system administrator via a web browser interface. Such interface may also be used to: modify such automatic adjustment parameters; change the coupon or rebate parameters; or withdraw the coupon or rebate.

Please amend the paragraph on page 12, lines 13-17, as follows.

fb
If the customer elects to purchase the selected products from the system for online sales with automatic rebate and coupon redemption 15, all applicable rebates and coupons are applied to the customer's purchases by the system 15 in the determination of a final purchase price for the customer. The customer can consummate the purchase by using a credit card for payment. The system ~~15 processes~~ 15 processes customer's credit cards for sales processing.

Please amend the paragraph on page 12, lines 18-23, as follows.

fb
Customer profiles, typically provided by customers during a customer profile generation activity, are selectively used by the system 15 to complete sales transactions and to ship products. Customer profile includes shipping address, credit card related information, etc. Once a customer profile is created, it is used to expedite subsequent customer purchases. ~~Customer's~~ Customers who choose not to have a profile created for them may be required to enter their shipping address, credit card related information, etc. during each purchasing activity.

Please amend the paragraph on page 13, lines 13-23, as follows.

fb
In one embodiment, the inventory of some of the products purchasable from the system 15 are selectively maintained by the ~~manufacturer / merchant~~ manufacturer/merchant environment 25. For such products, to perform order fulfillment activities, the system ~~15 interacts~~ 15 interacts with the ~~manufacturer / merchant~~ manufacturer/merchant environment 25, over the connection 45, in one of two approaches. In the first approach, the ~~manufacturer / merchant~~ manufacturer/merchant environment 25 receives purchase orders to some products currently available in their inventory from the system for online sales with automatic rebate and coupon redemption 15, along with rebate and coupon information, in order to perform order fulfillment for the customer. The customer profile, or a subset thereof, is visible to the

408 ~~manufacturer / merchant~~ manufacturer/merchant environment 25 which then ships the products to the customer. In effect, the customer pays the ~~manufacturer / merchant~~ manufacturer/merchant environment 25 directly for the products purchased from it.

Please amend the paragraphs beginning at on page 14, line 1, through page 16, line 14, as follows.

409 In the second approach, the system 15 purchases the products using all associated coupons and rebates from the ~~manufacturer / merchant~~ manufacturer/merchant environment 25 on behalf of the customer and has the purchased products shipped directly to the customer. In this scenario, the system 15 acts as a purchaser and pays for the products purchased from the ~~manufacturer / merchant~~ manufacturer/merchant environment 25. It then bills the customer for the actual purchase price that incorporates relevant rebates and coupons. Thus, the customer benefits from the instantaneous redemption of coupons and rebates facilitated by the coupon dispensing and redemption system 15.

In one embodiment, the system 15 serves as a front end to the e-commerce sites of manufacturers and merchants wherein customers purchase products from the system ~~15~~ and 15 and reimburse it, say via credit cards, for the products purchased online. The system 15 in turn acquires the products purchased by the customer from designated suppliers such as manufacturers, distributors or retail merchants. A supplier is selected based on the product category, the inventories of products at the various suppliers, the business arrangements made with various suppliers, and other criteria. In effect, the supplier sells the products to the system 15 which ensures the redemption of all available coupons and rebates for the purchases. The system ~~15~~ 15 sells those products back to the customer passing most of the savings from rebates and coupons to the customer. The system 15 selectively charges the suppliers a

transaction fee for generating their business. The customer is also selectively made to pay a service charge to the system 15 for its seamless and automatic rebate and coupon redemption.

89 In another embodiment of the present invention, the customer retrieves rebates and coupons from the system 15 and then saves these rebates and coupons, preferably in his browser software or on the hard disk of his computer 5. Such rebates and coupons are preferably saved in electronic form, for subsequent submission to the system for online sales with automatic rebate and coupon redemption 15, or to the ~~manufacturer/merchant~~ manufacturer/merchant environment 25, during a purchasing activity. When presented with such coupons during any purchasing activity, the ~~manufacturer/merchant~~ manufacturer/merchant environment 25 presents them, over the connection 45, to the system 15 for selective coupon and rebate authentication and selective redemption.

In another exemplary scenario, the online customer using the personal computer 5 accesses the Internet via a connection 30 employing a modem on his computer and a browser software on his computer. He then, using his browser software, navigates to a ~~manufacturer/merchant~~ manufacturer/merchant environment 25, such as an electronic mall, to purchase one or more items of his choice. A connection 50 established over the Internet between the computer 5 and the ~~manufacturer/merchant~~ manufacturer/merchant environment 25 allows user selection of purchasable items, optionally via a catalog of items presented to the customer by the ~~manufacturer/merchant~~ manufacturer/merchant environment 25. After selecting the desired items into a shopping cart, the customer invokes a rebate and coupon button on a screen presented by the ~~manufacturer/merchant~~ manufacturer/merchant environment 25 that results in the submission of the shopping cart to the system 15 via a connection 45. In response, the system 15 selectively returns all applicable coupons to each of the items in the customers

shopping cart. This includes manufacturer's coupons, retailer's coupons, etc. In addition, if any items in the shopping cart are not specific enough to unambiguously identify a manufacturer, the system 15 returns coupons for multiple manufacturers of similar products for the customer to choose from. The returned rebates and coupons are automatically applied by the ~~manufacturer/merchant~~ manufacturer/merchant environment 25 in the determination and display of a final price for the customer.

To submit online information on coupons to the system 15 so that they can be dispensed to customers, one or more ~~manufacturer/merchant~~ manufacturer/merchant environments 25 employ a connection 55, which ~~is some cases, such as~~ may be the Internet, and may be the same as the link 45 used by the ~~manufacturer/merchant~~ manufacturer/merchant environment 25 to extract coupons on behalf of a customer from the system for online sales with automatic rebate and coupon redemption 15.

The system 15 selectively provides manufacturers and merchants information on the customer's region, the volume of sales, the material velocity of the products, etc., ~~the giving~~ giving the ~~manufacturer/merchant~~ manufacturer/merchant environment 25 the ability to change coupons based on their sales goals and other criteria.

Fig. 2 is a diagram showing the various inputs and outputs of the system for online sales with automatic rebate and coupon redemption 15. The system 15 receives Request for Rebates and Coupons From Online Customers 105 and, in response, returns Rebates and Coupons To Online Customers 110. In addition, it receives a List of Purchases or Shopping Cart 115 from online merchants or online malls and, in response, it returns Rebates and Coupons 120. It also receives Scheduled and Unscheduled Update of Rebates and Coupons 125 from ~~manufacturer's~~

459 manufacturers and retailers. To automatically provide rebates and coupons to customers periodically, the system 15 performs Targeted Online Delivery 130, typically via email.

Please amend the paragraphs beginning at on page 16, line 19, through page 17, line 23, as follows.

4510 Fig. 3 shows the various elements contained in a rebate or a coupon in accordance with the present invention. The ~~coupon~~ coupons 300 dispensed by the system 15 are each a structured collection of information including an identification 305, information on the value of the coupon 320, an expiry date 325, images or links to ~~on~~ one or more images 330 for display purposes, links to a product manufacturer 310, and links to product information 315. Other information, such as a product code 335, a geographic region code 340, etc. may also be selectively included. Some of the information presented in a coupon may selectively be encrypted for subsequent decryption ~~and/or~~ and/or display either by the software at a customer's computer 5 or at a ~~manufacturer / merchant~~ manufacturer/merchant environment 25. In this embodiment, the coupon is presented as an HTML document with appropriate links to some of its elements as described above. The coupon may be stored in other document types also, as appropriate. Rebates are also structured similarly to coupons, and they typically contain all the elements described here for coupons.

In general, coupons and rebates dispensed by the system 15 may be selectively saved by customers for subsequent redemption. Saved coupons and rebates have an associated expiry date. The ~~manufacturer / merchant~~ manufacturer/merchant environment 25 may choose not to honor coupons that have expired. In one embodiment of the present invention, the ~~manufacturer / merchant~~ manufacturer/merchant environment 25 interacts with the system 15 to determine if an expired rebate or coupon should automatically be replaced by a newer one.

§10 In another embodiment, the coupons and rebates being dispensed are generated in eXtensible Manipulation Language (XML) format. The customer's computer may or may not be able to process such XML documents. If, for example, the customer's browser cannot process the coupon information, then it does not display such information properly and gives the customer the option to save the coupon in the computer's 5 hard disk. Such XML coupons may not be processed by the ~~manufacturer/merchant~~ manufacturer/merchant environment 25 ~~either~~ if the information systems at their web site are not capable of processing XML based coupons. In such situations, the XML based coupons and other coupons that cannot be processed are returned to the system 15 by the ~~manufacturer/merchant~~ manufacturer/merchant environment 25 for processing and for redemption.

Please amend the paragraphs on page 19, lines 1-21, as follows.

§11 Online Customers 450 access the system 15 over the connection 455. They can browse through the online ~~browsable~~ browse-able catalog of products and services 480 or search for a specific product or service based on criteria such as product category, geographical region, brand names, etc. Manufacturers and Online Merchants 460 access the system ~~15 over~~ 15 over the connection 465.

In one embodiment of the present invention, when providing access to customers who want to download coupons and rebates, the system 15 contains a ~~browsable~~ browse-able indexed selection software making it easy for the customer to locate or search the required coupon or rebate. It also provides vectors to advertising placed by manufacturers or online merchants located either at the web server 20 or at an external web server. In addition, it can provide vectors to sales points such as online merchants or electronic malls where the associated products may be available for sale if it is not currently available for sale at the system for online sales with

automatic rebate and coupon redemption 15. Moreover, the dispensed coupons and rebates can be automatically incorporated into the pricing logic of a merchant or manufacturer's electronic commerce system to which the system ~~15 provides~~ 15 provides links for customer access.

§11
In a similar embodiment of the present invention, coupon verification is performed by the electronic commerce software of the manufacturer or online merchant to which a customer migrates to from the ~~browsable~~ browse-able indexed coupon selection software, along with a coupon ~~and/or~~ and/or rebate for one or more products. This implies that a customer can consummate a purchase of a product at a merchant or manufacturer's e-commerce site following the selection of a coupon or rebate from the system 15 and subsequent vectoring with a coupon ~~and/or~~ and/or rebate to the e-commerce site.

Please amend the paragraph on page 20, lines 5-14, as follows.

§12
Downloaded coupons may be printed as bar-coded coupons by customers for subsequent redemption at traditional neighborhood merchant shops. The printing is facilitated by a print engine that is either available at the customer's computer or can be easily downloaded to the customer's computer. The same is true for coupons and rebates emailed to customers by the system ~~15 as~~ 15 as part of a "targeted coupons dispensing activity" in which individual customers are targeted to receive appropriate coupons based upon their shopping behavior, as determined by the system for online sales with automatic rebate and coupon redemption 15. Automatic targeting of customers by the system 15 is based on customer's buying habits, current marketing promotions, etc., via for e.g. electronic mail (email). Customers have the ability to redeem them ~~with-out~~ without having to print ~~it~~ them, as is typically done for purchases from online merchants.

Please amend the paragraphs beginning on page 20, at line 21, through page 22, line 3, as follows.

13
Coupons typically have an associated expiry date. Vendors assign expiry dates to not only the advertisements of products but also for their associated coupons. While browsing the web server 20 for products and coupons, when customers are presented with an advertisement, they are also presented with a coupon for it. A displayed advertisement vectors seamlessly, via a link, to an associated manufacturer's or merchant's online information website. If a customer activates such a link to a an online merchant's e-commerce site, the coupon for the current product(s) is also automatically transferred to the online merchant's e-commerce site, if necessary, in order to facilitate the expected sale. Information carried by the coupon(s) may be employed by pricing and quote generation components of a merchant's e-commerce software.

In general, the system 15 integrates with sales force automation (SFA) software employed by manufacturers and merchants. It also integrates with e-commerce platforms that provide multi-vendor sales. For the multi-vendor platforms where similar products from multiple vendors are available for sale, the system ~~15selectively~~ 15 selectively dispenses "generic" coupons that will apply towards a product from any of the participating vendors. Such generic coupons may be provided to a customer along with a vendor-supplied coupon, if any.

In one embodiment of the present invention, information related to the geographical location of a customer is selectively used by system 15 in determining the type ~~and/or~~ and/or value of coupon to dispense. For example, a manufacturer may desire to provide coupons of different value and expiry dates for the same product in different sales regions. The system 15 makes it possible to customize the different attributes of a coupon such as its value, expiry date,

etc., to specific geographical zones or to specific user types. For example, a corporate customer may be provided a different coupon from those provided to non-corporate customers.

B13
The system 15 optionally charges manufacturers and online merchants for its services. These charges may be levied by one of several different methods, some of them related to the number of customers who download coupons, some related to the number of customers who redeem those coupons, and others related to both these attributes. For example, local small businesses may provide a coupon and they are charged based on the number of ~~coupon's~~ coupons accessed or redeemed.

Please amend the paragraphs beginning on page 23, at line 8, through page 24, line 20, as follows.

B14
The online nature of the coupon system provided by system 15 makes it possible for merchants and manufacturers to devise a coupon based marketing and sales strategy where the expiry date, and the volume of coupons in a marketing campaign are dynamically adjusted to meet goals. For example, current sales volume might determine changes to ~~coupons~~ coupon's value ~~and/or~~ and/or expiry date. It would be possible to stop coupons associated with a marketing campaign if sales targets are met. It would also be possible to yank out a coupon based marketing campaign if necessary.

The success of a rebate ~~and/or~~ and/or coupon based marketing and sales campaign can be dynamically and frequently ascertained. Automatic reports on coupon distribution and the redemption rates of coupons are provided to the manufacturers and merchants by the system for online sales with automatic rebate and coupon redemption 15.

Identity of potential customers who access coupons and those who redeem them are maintained by the system for online sales with automatic rebate and coupon redemption 15.

Such customer related information can later be used for mass ~~mailing / distribution~~ mailing/distribution of coupons. Manufacturers and merchants provide information on their mass mailing needs and system ~~15 mails~~ 15 mails (or emails) coupons based on those needs and on online customer information collected automatically. Once coupons are mailed to potential customers, they are tracked to see if they are ever redeemed. Tracking of mailed coupons provides information related to the efficacy of sales and marketing strategy employed.

314 If a new product is being released by a manufacturer, the system 15 is used to setup, manage and monitor promotional activities based on coupons ~~and/or~~ and/or rebates. The time frame for such promotional activities, the number of coupons and/or rebates to be dispensed, the duration and time frame for the promotional activities, etc., are set by the manufacturer using the promotional server 505. The manufacturer may modify the parameters of the coupons ~~and/or~~ and/or rebates (such as coupon or rebate amount, the quantity, the duration, the applicable products, etc.) based on a preset threshold quantity of dispensed coupons or rebates, based on monitored sales activities, etc.

The system 15 can be used to ~~adaptably~~ adaptively move inventory by managing the amount and quantity of rebates and coupons. Therefore, the system 15 incorporates inventory tracking, coupon and rebate amount management, marketing activities, sales tracking and other business functions so as to make it possible to not only create promotional material but also to ~~manage / modify~~ manage/modify the promotional activities based on buyer response to such promotional activities.

The system 15 makes it possible to integrate coupon delivery with software registration and product surveys. Customers who buy and install software are often reluctant to register them with the vendor. This situation is true for other types of products too. In order to provide an

8314
incentive for registration of products, the manufacturers or vendors of such products can integrate the system ~~15 with~~ 15 with the registration process so that customers might be enticed with coupons for their next purchase.

Please amend the paragraphs beginning on page 25, at line 9, through page 26, line 2, as follows.

4314
Fig. 5 is a perspective diagram of an online sales environment 503 comprising a promotional server 505 that facilitates: management of promotional material by manufacturers, retailers and distributors via an issuer's web client 509; participation in online promotional sales by non-seller web servers 513, affiliated seller's web and application server 517 and 3rd party seller's web and application server 521; integration of credit card companies 529; and registration by buyers via buyer's web client 511. The promotional server 505 is selectively used by ~~issuer's~~ issuers of promotional material such as coupons, rebates, etc.: to create and manage promotional material (in real time or in non-real time) that are applicable to online and offline sales; to provide an online coupon and rebate redemption service that is integrated with their own online sales systems or with an online sales system managed by any other third parties; and to ~~collect / retrieve~~ collect/retrieve information related to online sales and the efficacy of their online promotions.

Online ~~buyer's~~ buyers register with the promotional server 505, via buyer's web client 511, in order to: automatically register products purchased online with the manufacturers, for warranties and other services, with the help of the promotional server 505; receive refunds due to the buyer from the application of coupons ~~and / or~~ and/or rebates to online purchases consummated by buyer on 3rd party seller's web and application server 521; and to receive

B15
information on product information, sales, discounts, product recall, etc. via email or by other mechanisms.

Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 26, at line 20, through page 27, line 2, as follows.

9/16
This search engine may also be used to supplement other search engines of sellers, portals, etc. For example, on a first search engine, a buyer may enter search terms which are used to search a corresponding database for information, goods, or services that are offered for sale. Such search terms are also used by the promotional server 505 to search the plurality of promotions stored therein. Alternatively, the plurality of promotions may also be stored ~~in~~ along in/along with the first search engine for searching through the first search engine.

B16
[Please amend the paragraph on page 28, lines 11-23, as follows.]

The affiliated seller's web and application server 517 is more tightly integrated with the promotional server 505 than is the 3rd party seller's web and application server 521. This makes it possible for the promotional server 505 to interact in more than one way with the affiliated seller's web and application server 517 in completing a ~~buyers~~ buyer's online purchases. For example, in one embodiment, the affiliated seller's web and application server 517 charges the buyer only for the actual purchase price taking into account any and all rebates or coupons that may apply towards the buyers purchases, and in turn conducts a transaction with the promotional server 505 to recover the amount of coupon or rebate that is not charged to the customer. The promotional server later interacts with one or more associated ~~issuer~~ issuers to recover the cost of the coupons or rebates redeemed by the buyer. Such interaction is selectively conducted in online interactive mode with issuers or in a batch or deferred mode.

Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 29, lines 13, through page 30, line 2, as follows.

518 The non-seller web server 513 typically carries promotional offer posting 515 that typically ~~provide~~ provides a vector to associated web pages hosted by the promotional server 505. By activating the promotional offer posting 515 on web pages provided by the non-seller web server 513, the buyer can migrate to online sales related web pages provided by the promotional server 505 and purchase associated products, while also availing of rebates ~~and/or~~ and/or coupons associated with the purchased product(s). In completing the online sales transaction with the buyer, the promotional server 505: prompts the buyer for credit-card information and shipping information if the buyer is not a registered buyer; retrieves coupon or rebate amount for the product(s) selected by buyer; applies all coupons and rebates retrieved for the purchased products; selectively interacts with a credit card processing service 531 or credit card company 529 in order to process buyer's credit card information; selectively interacts with the issuer of associated promotional offer posting to inform issuer of sales related information; and selectively interacts with the issuer to charge the issuer for services provided during the sale.

Please amend the paragraphs beginning on page 30, lines 12, through page 32, line 2, as follows.

519 In one embodiment, the interaction between the promotional server 505 and the issuer's is in real time. Such interaction is typically facilitated by integration software on the issuer's system 525. The promotional server 505 conducts transactions with the integration software on the issuer's system 525 to send information on redeemed coupons ~~and/or~~ and/or rebates to the issuer and to achieve reimbursement for coupons and rebates honored by the promotional server 505.

310
In another embodiment, the promotional server 505 communicates a list of coupons and rebates honored by buyers to one or more ~~issuer's~~ issuers, and the ~~issuer's~~ issuers, in turn, transfer reimbursements associated with those redeemed coupons and rebates to the promotional server 505. Such reimbursements may be conducted employing money transfer into an established bank account or by other means such as electronic fund transfer, checks, etc. The communication between the promotional server 505 and the issuer's systems, such as the integration software on the issuer's system 525 or the issuer's direct application interface 527, regarding redeemed coupons and rebates may be conducted in interactive mode in real time, in non-interactive mode in real time, in batch mode in deferred mode, batch mode in real-time, etc.

In one embodiment, a buyer, using the buyer's web client 541, interacts with the 3rd party seller's web and application server 521 to conduct online purchases. The 3rd party seller's web and application server 521 charges the buyer the full amount on the purchased products including the amount on the rebates and coupons, if any ~~rebate~~ rebates or ~~coupon~~ coupons are associated with the purchased products, but displays the amount of ~~coupons and / rebates hat~~ coupons/rebates that will be reimbursed to them. Such charges are made to the credit card account provided by the buyer to the 3rd party seller's web and application server 521. The 3rd party seller's web and application server 521 then interacts with the promotional server 505 to communicate details of the online purchases made by the buyer and buyer information, including the buyer's credit card account information. The promotional server 505 then reimburses the buyer the total of all the ~~coupons and / rebates~~ coupons/rebates that apply to the buyer's purchases by conducting a transaction with the credit card processing service 531 or the credit card ~~company / companies~~ company/companies 529. Such reimbursement transactions with the credit card processing service 531 or the credit card ~~company / companies~~ company/companies

529 are selectively conducted in real-time or in deferred mode after batching one or more buyer redemptions.

B14
In one embodiment, the 3rd party seller's web and application server 521 does not provide any indication of the completion of a buyer's online purchase to the promotional server 505. Instead, the promotional server 505 determines the completion of online purchase by the buyer from the 3rd party seller's web and application server 521 and determines the buyer information details and details of products purchased from sales completion document made available to the buyer from the 3rd party seller's web and application server 521. Such sales completion document may be a an online purchase order provided to the buyer, or an online order tracking web page presented to the buyer. Other mechanisms for determining purchase order completion may be employed by the promotional server to determine the completion of online purchases by the buyer.

Please amend the paragraph on page 34, lines 8-12, as follows.

B20
Service charges can be applied to the issuer, or the issuer's account, buyer's account, ~~and~~ and/or to the 3rd party seller's web and application server 521. Such surcharge (service charges) can be used to collect value for services rendered by the promotional server 505. In addition, the issuer ~~and~~ and/or the buyer may pay more than the promotional amount ~~and~~ and/or sales price less the promotional amount, respectively, as an incentive to the buyer ~~and~~ and/or the seller.

Please amend the paragraph on page 35, lines 5-10, as follows.

B20
The buyer's account may comprise an account such as a credit card or bank account that is independent of the promotional server. Alternatively, the buyer's account may be a credit or deposit account managed directly by the promotional server. Similarly, the issuer's account

4328 might be a credit or deposit account managed directly by the promotional server. Promotional server may bill ~~a issuer and / or~~ an issuer's and/or buyer's account on a monthly basis or charge the ~~issuer and / or~~ issuer's and/or buyer's account immediately.

Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 35, line 14, through page 36, line 2, as follows.

4328 In ~~an~~ another embodiment, the promotional server 505 constructs a promotional offer posting 507 from a plurality of issuers of promotions and corresponding sales information retrieved from a seller or the seller's web and application server. A buyer browses (by category) or searches the sales information in the promotional offer posting 507 to identify an item for purchasing. Upon receiving a purchase request for such item from the buyer, the promotional server 505 charges the buyer's account for the sales price less the promotional amount, then uses the promotional server's account (which may be setup by the issuer or through contributions from the issuer, for example) to pay the full sales price directly to the seller. Although, tighter integration may be used, the promotional server 505 need only deliver ~~its~~ it's account information, buyer's shipping information and the sales item(s) information to the non-integrated seller's online sales system. The seller's system need not distinguish this interaction with traditional online sales interaction with a buyer without promotions.

Please amend the paragraph on page 36, lines 14-20, as follows.

4328 The manufacturer may also control the rebate. This may involve adjusting a rebate parameter or canceling the rebate. Rebate parameters may include, for example, a rebate amount, quantity of rebates offered, rebate offering time frame, rebate terms and conditions, goods or services associated with the rebate, particular ~~seller's~~ sellers to which the rebate applies, manufacturer and/or distributors involved, the issuer, automatic thresholds and conditions under

523 which other rebate parameters will change, passwords, and other account information regarding the issuer or other parties involved, etc.

Please amend the paragraphs beginning on page 40, line 14, through page 41, line 11, as follows.

As with the rebate and coupon systems (which constitute promotional systems) described in reference to Figs. 6 and 7, respectively, the aforementioned variations and further functionality can be applied to the general case, the promotional embodiment of Fig. 8.

524 Fig. 9 is a flow diagram illustrating the application of various aspects of the present invention to any promotional processing wherein the promotion may involve more ~~that~~ than a discount off a purchase price. In particular, at a block 909, a first party (a "promoter") offers one or more items online for sale. A promotion of a second party is associated with at least one of the sales items at a block 913. A purchase request from a buyer for the item being offered online is received at a block 917. In response, a buyer is required to pay a purchase amount corresponding to the sales price amount for the item, at a block 921. Thereafter, at a block 925, the first party receives an indication that the payment occurred. At a block 929, the first party delivers the promotion value to the buyer.

In some embodiments, the delivery of the promotion value will only occur after at least one promotion condition has been met. For example, the promotion condition may require that several of the ~~item~~ items offered for sale ~~is~~ be purchased, and/or such items ~~are~~ be purchased simultaneously or within a fixed time period. Many other types of promotion conditions may be applied which parallel traditional promotional techniques.

Nearly all of the aforementioned variations and further functionality described with reference to Figs. 6-8 ~~applies~~ apply to the present embodiment illustrated in Fig. 9. Further, the

functionality of Figs. 6-9 may be combined into a single system to support all types of promotions with both price discounting and non-price value offerings.

62A